

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **A-30**

NEW YORK TIMES
16 OCTOBER 1980

Letters

America's Strategy Gap

To the Editor:

Your Oct. 7 editorial "Mr. Reagan's Missile Gap" is as fatally flawed as SALT II. The flaws of both the treaty and the editorial are rooted in a blind faith in the precepts of Mutual Assured Destruction — MAD.

MAD insists that both sides aim their awesome weapons at the civilian population of the opponent and that those civilians remain undefended. If both sides do this, then both nuclear war and nuclear blackmail become unthinkable. Hence the notion in the editorial that "the very idea of superiority has lost all meaning." Hence the willingness to accept a SALT II which is so lopsided in favor of the Soviets.

Why worry that the Soviets can, according to Secretary of Defense Brown, develop a first-strike capability against all our deterrent except Polaris submarines at sea? Why not let the newest Soviet strategic bomber go uncounted while U.S. bombers in the desert are counted in the balance? Why not allow the Soviets an unlimited number of mobile ICBM launchers (SS-16's)? Why worry that — as the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence reports — some critical provisions of SALT II can be verified with only low confidence? What differences does a bad treaty make if Soviet superiority would be meaningless anyway?

For that matter, why bother with a SALT treaty at all if the numbers and types of nuclear weapons have no real meaning?

What Governor Reagan perceives — but the editorial does not — is that the Soviets rejected MAD from the outset, labeling the theory "bourgeois naïveté." The Soviets have maintained that a combination of strategic offensive and defensive forces can be acquired which will permit them to



fight and win a nuclear war. Reagan further knows that that is precisely what the Soviets have been doing — creating offensive nuclear forces to kill U.S. weapons and strategic defenses, which sharply limits the damage from surviving U.S. weapons. So the Soviet war-winning doctrine is not to be dismissed as rhetoric.

While there is in fact a "missile gap" in that the Soviets outnumber the United States 3 to 2 in strategic missiles and 5 to 1 in deliverable megatonnage, the most important problem is the "strategy gap." So long as we persist in MAD theories and the Soviets persist in their inexorable quest for nuclear war-winning capabilities the dangerous imbalances in military power will grow and SALT treaties will continue merely to codify those imbalances.

DANIEL O. GRAHAM
Lieutenant General, U.S.A. (Retired)
Washington, Oct. 7, 1980

The writer is a member of the National Strategy Committee of the American Security Council, a private organization.